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Department of State

INFO : AmConsuls BELEM, BELO HORIZONTE, CURITIBA,
PORTO ALEGRE, RECIFE, SALVADOR, SAO PAULO

AmEmbassy Office BRASILIA

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Criticism of Military Intervention in Civilian
Sector Continues

SUMMARY

A series of allegations of unwarranted military intervention in the civilian sector have occurred during the administration of President COSTA E SILVA. The two most recent incidents concern allegations of large numbers of political prisoners held in Brasilia and the conduct of the IPM (Military-Police Inquiry) in Curitiba, Paraná. Although all of the incidents to date have been minor, each makes somewhat more difficult the re-establishment of political normality.

1. Introduction. Since the inauguration of President Costa e Silva in March 1967, there has been a series of incidents involving alleged unwarranted military intervention in the civil sector. Previous examples of these incidents are the charges of intimidation of cabinet ministers by hard-line army officers (WEEK 27, Item 2), and alleged military intervention in the State of Rio (Rio A-203). Recent charges aired in Congress concerning the large number and mistreatment of political prisoners in Brasilia and allegations of repressive activities of the IPM headed by Col. Ferdinando de CARVALHO in Curitiba add two more episodes to this list.

GROUP 3 - Downgraded at 4-year intervals.
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2. Political Prisoners in Brasilia. Opposition Federal Deputy Hernando ALVES has led the recent congressional attack against what he terms the arbitrary military rule of the government, charging that 70 to 80 political prisoners are incarcerated in Brasilia. (Comment: High level Federal District police officials, in conversations with Embassy Officers, have categorically denied Alves' statements and said that as of October 10 there were no political prisoners in their custody in Brasilia. The Army could be holding prisoners in the Federal District or in Goias but information on this subject is so tightly held by 11th Military Region Commander General Abdon SENNA that even Brazilian police are unable to obtain it.) MDB Secretary General Martins RODRIGUES's request for the formation of an external Congressional Committee authorized to visit prisoners held under the jurisdiction of the IV Military Judicial Region was rejected by the Chamber of Deputies, by a vote of 125 to 97, on October 10. Radical MDB Deputy, Márcio MOREIRA ALVES, author of the controversial book about political prisoners, Torturas e Torturados (Brasilia A-19), was unsuccessful in his attempt to visit prisoners held in Juiz de Fora and denounced the Army's action in a Chamber of Deputies speech.

3. IPM in Curitiba, Paraná. Hard-line Colonel Ferdinando de Carvalho headed the Rio IPM of the Communist Party but was transferred to Curitiba, Paraná because he fell into disfavor with President CASTELLO BRANCO. In Curitiba Carvalho recently became the head of an IPM to investigate the distribution of subversive propaganda in Paraná. In September 1967, stories appeared in the press alleging mass arrests (Comment: As of mid-October only about 12 arrests had been made.) and arbitrary treatment of prisoners as a result of this IPM's actions. On September 15 the Association of Brazilian Lawyers (OAB) in Paraná sent a petition to the Commander of the 5th Military Region, General Clóvis Bandeira BRASIL, requesting that he intervene in the operation of the IPM so that prisoners being held incommunicado could have contact with their lawyers. Brasil, who in 1965 was Chief of Cabinet to then War Minister Costa e Silva, denied the request stating that the Code of Military Justice permits the head of an IPM to hold prisoners incommunicado during the time necessary to make appropriate investigations. He stated that the IPM will continue "with fearlessness and boldness, until it is possible to reveal to the people of Santa Catarina and Paraná the dangers to which they are exposed from the surreptitious and persistent action of international communism."

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4. The dispute moved from the local to the national scene on October 9 when the President of the OAB's Paraná Section presented a petition to Minister of the Army General Lyra TAVARES requesting that measures be taken to insure that Brasil and Carvalho would permit lawyers to meet with their clients. The President of the Federal Council of the OAB announced he had sent messages supporting this position to the Ministers of Justice and Army and that a meeting of the OAB's Federal Council would be held October 18 to vote on a motion of solidarity for the position of the Paraná lawyers. Lyra Tavares' October 16 message to Brasil announcing his complete confidence in the manner the Region Commander would handle the matter indicates the protest had little or no effect.

5. Comment. Although the incidents involving alleged military intervention in the civilian sector have all been minor to date, each makes somewhat more difficult the re-establishment of political normality and Costa e Silva's desire for a broadly-based national consensus.

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